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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000076

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO RESUME  
ACTIVITIES IN DEFIANCE OF GOVERNMENT CLOSURE

REF: A. 04 MANAMA 1658

[1](#)B. 04 MANAMA 1503

[1](#)C. 04 MANAMA 1489

[1](#)D. 04 MANAMA 1482

[1](#)E. 04 MANAMA 1744

Classified by DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) announced January 6 that it would resume its activities in defiance of the government's decision to dissolve the organization in September 2004. Members of the group voted unanimously to support the move. BCHR President Nabeel Rajab said the Center was acting within its rights, as the Bahraini constitution guarantees the freedom of peaceful assembly. Rajab told PolOff that following the announcement, the Center has not actually resumed its activities because he and others in the group are busy writing two reports, one of which is part of the MEPI-funded Internews regional review on freedom of the press. When those two reports are completed later this month, Rajab said the Center would resume a full range of activities -- from conducting studies on the human rights situation to organizing forums and demonstrations. (Note: If the Center is re-opened, demonstrations would fall outside of its charter in purely legal terms, risking running afoul of the government once again. End Note.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) The BCHR filed a court case challenging the constitutionality of its closure, and the High Civil Court will announce its verdict on the case January 31. The Center's members expect the Court to side with the GOB.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The BCHR's participation in the MEPI-funded Internews project is an example of the positive, practical services the organization provides in Bahrain. The BCHR enjoys popular support in certain circles, especially among Shia, and knows this is its biggest advantage in challenging the GOB. Rajab understands that the decision to resume its activities could provoke the government to act against him and his colleagues. He continues to express hope that he and the government can find accommodation that would allow the BCHR to operate legally.  
MONROE